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FROM THE
THREE RIVERS "INQUIRER,"

OF

Saturday 14, and Tuesday 17th April, 1855.

PERMANENCY OF THE SEAT OF
GOVERNMENT.

Petitions are now distributed throughout the country for signatures, requesting his Excellency to exercise the prerogative of the Crown, and select some permanent place for the annual assembling of Parliament.

We have been frequently told that the system of itinerant Parliaments has effected much good for the country. This has been so often and so energetically reiterated, that the public gave it a kind of passive credence, without questioning its claim to belief. The assertion was regarded as a sort of axiom challenging our assent by its self-evident truth. This impression has evaporated, and the people are now examining the reasons, if any, that sustain the assertion. The plausible, indeed the only one, is, that these periodical migrations of Parliament have made both sections of the Province better acquainted; that they have thus discovered each others good points, and learned mutually to prize and adopt what is laudable in each. Now this is a very pleasant picture, exhibited for public contemplation; but we deny, and without any restriction on the denial, that the people of both sections of Canada have mutually learned more of each other, from the shuttlecock system of Government. Any experience gained this way was confined to the Hon. Gentlemen who compose the Legislature. We are not aware of any public effort made by them to disseminate their new and enlarged impressions,

ostentatiously trumpeted to the public as the results of a system worked out by the doctrine of exchange. The advocates of a strolling Government should point to some tangible good, conferred by it on the community. What prejudice peculiar to either section of the Province, has been removed or ameliorated? What political tenet has been abandoned? What vicious doctrine in legislation has been abjured? What constitutional fallacy has been exploded? None. Our legislation is as distinctive in its character and as sectional as ever, and until we see our Parliament legislating for Canada, as a unity, we must refuse credence to the benefits that the self-love or self-deception of some would lead us to believe accrued from the present system. The Members of Parliament who travelled periodically to exchange courtesies in a character semi-official and semi-social,—a kind of mongrel Legislative deputation,—may have had the angularities of their ideas and opinions, and perhaps prejudices, rounded off by the friction of contact; but we have yet to learn that this very desirable “consummation” could not have been achieved in a permanent residence, as well as in a shifting habitation. Admit there has been a cultivation of “brotherly love” (which, by the way, if the debates of the present session be an index, we may reasonably doubt) at what an enormous cost to the public is it attained. If any mutual knowledge has been gained by the people of both sections, (and we believe there has,) it is not through the system of alternate Parliaments. Other and more powerful agencies have effectively achieved what this system was, and is, impotent to perform. Had the Government never left Montreal,—and its flight from that city was rank revenge, moral and physical cowardice,—this mutual knowledge and appreciation would not have been impeded. Had the Government in its flight nestled itself in “a lodge in some wilderness,” beyond the verge of civilization, we would still recognize each other, and increased esteem would be produced by the recognition. It is downright egotism for our Legislators to assume for a moment, that social in-

telligence and social esteem must be filtered through them before they reach the people. The Commerce of Canada will bring her children into contact, without the intervention of Legislative Assemblies. It is this that has effected what is credited to the alternate system, and that will unite in a bond of common interests, the inhabitants of the colony. It is worse than idle,—it is most culpable,—to talk of a separation of the sections of the Province. It is only a petty, silly, superficial party threat, to subserve the views of a political clique. Were the shred of parchment or paper that represents the connection, destroyed to-morrow, the East and West would not only remain united, but the Union would be more consolidated. The common welfare points that way, and legislative acts are impotent to retard, obstruct, or dissolve a Union, based on such a principle. We have been so plentifully stuffed with the political humbug of "separation" that we nauseate the very word. If the Ministry proposed such a measure now, the people would coerce them to its rejection. The Union that expediency put on paper; and which was merely the result of circumstances; has been confirmed, cemented, and rendered permanent by the necessity for mutual co-operation, to secure mutual advantages; and this our rulers can neither weaken nor dissolve. We want Upper Canada and she wants us; the sooner therefore the bubble of separation is exploded, the more creditable will it be for the veracity and intelligence of public men. "Separation" is one of the popular delusions, nurtured and matured by political ingenuity. It has, however, been so long exposed to the public gaze, presented in so many attitudes, that its novelty has disappeared, and the appetite for monstrosities satiated.

If our Legislators are guided by public opinion, as they profess to be, can they see nothing indicative in the indifference the people manifest to the selection of a locality for the Government. We only ask for a permanent place, and not have the archives of the Province periodically endangered by flood and fire. We also wish to be relieved from the enormous,

and very unjustifiable expense of periodical migration. An opinion is becoming prevalent that the presence of the Government is a very doubtful good. Certainly Montreal is quite indifferent. Her experience does not make her anxious for the return of the Parliament. Quebec withholds her invitation. Ottawa gives a kind of half-welcome. Kingston is silent, and Hamilton indifferent. The course most in accordance with reason and public feeling is, that Government select some locality, and *stay there*.

Our *devil* timidly suggests that members of the House of Assembly should tack an additional P. to their names; M. P. P. P. would then read, Member of the Provincial *Pendulum* Parliament. He says the idea was suggested by the boyish pastime of *swinging*, in which, at each revolution he shouted, "here we go up, there we go down."—Poor little *devil*, he stumbled on a plain truth, viz., that some men never get beyond the intellectual standard of boys. So innocent is our little *imp* that he thinks the "top and marbles" a logical complement of the pendulum.

(From the Three Rivers Inquirer of April 17.)

A portion of the Upper Canada Press affect to be mightily surprised at the independent position assumed by the Legislative Council, in relation to the permanent seat of Government. It is asked with a theatrical start of surprise what has the Legislative Council to do with the business? why interfere with the decision of the Legislative Assembly? There is a feigned alarm lest both Houses be brought into collision, and a delicate anxiety lest his Excellency be placed in an "awkward position." The act of the Legislative Council is stigmatized "an extraordinary step,"—a trespass on the preserves of the House of Assembly. It is sneeringly asserted that the opinion of the Legislative Council was neither asked nor required in the matter,—that it is a body "effete and will soon be defunct." This, and much more of silly verbiage is now exuding from some of the Upper Canada Press. The motive for all this pretty effusion is transparent. If Toronto suck the paps of Government for the next four years, afterwards some of her neighbouring cities may have a similar indulgence, and at length, the Legislative Dairy be permanently pastured in Western Canada.

We do not blame them for preferring themselves to others; they would be more than patriots, if they did not; and no one supposes them to be self-sacrificing saints; but we ask them not to put themselves forward as the advocates of a system of reckless plunder, nor tax the Province to pander to their selfish crotchets. Every candid and reasonable argument tells in favor of an immediate extinction of the gigantic improvidence of a migratory Legislature; and any argument that is good to terminate this system of Parliamentary emigration, at the end of four years, is still stronger in favour of prompt extinction. It is fresh in the memory of our readers how the mania for retrenchment seized on the public. The howl in the Upper Province was so loud and long, that a Committee was

appointed to make inquisition, as an appeasing oblation to the popular demand. This Committee entered on the repulsive business of discovering the exact *minimum* of bread and butter that ought to sustain life. The public then imagined that the subordinate clerks of the Legislature could "dine on a sunbeam and sup on the grilled wing of a blue-bottle fly." Even the first minister of the Crown in Canada was doled out a pittance, not enough to supply the necessary hospitalities of his position; and so far was the expensive economy pushed, that speculation was made, more than temptation, almost a necessity. The demon of retrenchment was at length appeased by the diminished incomes of the Clerks, and the pinched sustenance of their families; and it is only this session that our rulers have plucked up moral courage to make some indemnification for the popular injustice. Yet now, when it is necessary to subserve a local purpose, the retrenchment theory is abandoned as a thing "stale and unprofitable," repudiated as a barren investment, unproductive of political capital. Where is the consistency of the men, who, a few years since, shouted with such energy, as if the salvation of the colony depended on the strength of their lungs, for the reduction of salaries to the starving point; and now vociferously justify the profligate expenditure of thousands. We are inevitably forced to conclude that intense selfishness involving the most reprehensible contradiction, opposes the immediate selection of a permanent seat of Government.

The *Hamilton Spectator* asks, "What has the Legislative Council to do in the business," We answer, just as much as the Legislative Assembly. Is the Council not recognized as a constitutional component of the Legislature? Do we accept measures at the hands of the popular branch, as law, without the concurrence of the Upper House? The Legislative Council possess the right to originate any measures (money ones excepted) that the other branch has. And this right is secured by usage, constitutional law, and in virtue of their nomination by the Crown. They are the veriest cowards, the most unfaithful of

public stewards, if they shrink from the exercise of a right, they hold in trust for the public welfare. By their position they are partially removed from the influence of popular clamor, and will not servilely lend the ear to the whispered insinuation of the oily patriot, or the noisy demand of the demagogue. This, which is their peculiar excellence, constitutes the "head and front" of their offence. Heretofore the Legislative Council has been scoffed at, twitted, and held up to public censure, because it did not originate measures; and now when it proposes one of immense advantage to every man in Canada, their conduct is reprobated by denying their right to independent legislative action. There is conjured a dreamy dread of collision between both Houses, a visionary and unreal phantom to be created by the absence of unanimity. There is no more danger of collision, on this question, from the present Legislative Council than there will be from the imbecile abortion by which it is to be succeeded. We had a recent "collision" on the Seigniorial Tenure Act and what was the result? The House of Assembly swallowed wholesale, the expurgations and amendments of the Upper House. The House of Assembly displayed no fastidiousness in accepting the corrections in their Bill. Like reasonable men they admitted their fallibility, and displayed a very commendable docility in adopting a corrected copy of their Act. If both branches assume a dogged hostility and deem it a point of honor to admit no recession, then a collision may be regarded as injurious to the legislative character of both branches; but while there exists a mutual readiness to entertain and examine calmly the measures of each other, with the view, ultimately, of reaching a just decision, collisions, so far from being objects of dread, are positive advantages.

It is further flippantly said, "The opinion of the Upper House was neither asked nor required in the matter." But did the country ask the opinion of the Lower House, as to the claim of Toronto to the seat of Government? The opinion was gratuitously volunteered; and if the Legislative Council, in the ex-

ercise of their duty, display some anxiety for the careful administration of the public revenue, are they to be sneeringly told "they are a body effete and will soon be defunct." But if they are "effete" who contributed most largely to render them such? The ultra loyal Upper Canadians. The Legislative Council committed a grave error in yielding their concurrence to the Rebellion Losses Bill; they stumbled then, and have yet scarcely recovered their former attitude. Who lent them the parting kick in their fall? the loyal *par excellence* of Western Canada. They were reviled, snubbed, scoffed, scorned, maligned, buffeted, and slandered, for doing precisely what the popular representatives had performed. The popular branch originated and carried the Rebellion Losses Bill, and the public with the fickleness of a weather-cock, sought protection from the Legislative Council against their own representatives; and because it was withheld, the "Sovereign people" vented their displeasure in coarse abuse. There is some excuse for the Legislative Councillors for this serious error. The Lower House was arrayed against them, countenanced by a very *plastic* Governor. This, though no justification, is a palliative plea; but now when about to make some expiation for the former offence, they are greeted with a growl of scorn. Truly the vilest sinners make the most earnest saints. If there were one doctrine, more than another, the peculiar idol of conservative worship, it was that of constitutional restraint on the extravagance of the popular branch; yet so impatient are these very conservatives to launch us on the muddy and turbulent wave of democracy, that they cannot patiently wait for a development of the New Legislative Council Bill, but vilify the present Council and question its constitutional right to exercise its undoubted privileges.